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LANSING



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REVISED

August 25, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman

SUBJECT: Approval of the Update of Professional Development Vision and Standards for Michigan Educators

In 1996, the Michigan Curriculum Framework included a professional development vision and corresponding standards. In response to that vision, there has been a renewed, more urgent need for professional development that refocuses on and results in increased student achievement. The Michigan Department of Education, working with support from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), convened a group of Michigan educators to draft an Updated Vision and Standards for Professional Learning of Michigan Educators (Exhibit A) to align with a focus on adult learning theory, teacher quality (as it affects student achievement), and a renewed urgency to meet the needs of all Michigan students

The vision developed by that group of forward-thinkers has been reviewed and refined by hundreds of Michigan educators and representatives of Michigan's professional organizations, math and science centers, school improvement facilitators, and higher education staff. The consensus of expert thinking from all the reviewers indicated that the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards of Staff Development in 2001 served as an appropriate companion as it represented another update of the standards in the Michigan Curriculum Framework. In the spring of 2003, both an updated vision and NSDC standards were given formal field review. In response to suggestions received from teachers, principals, superintendents, curriculum directors, and representatives of higher education, the vision and standards were further refined. The Professional Standards Commission for Teachers (PSCT) approved the draft on May 1, 2003.

On May 22, 2003, Susan Gutierrez, Michigan's 2002-2003 Teacher of the Year, issued four challenges to the State Board of Education as she concluded her year. The third challenge was to ensure all Michigan teachers opportunities for quality professional development saying, "Educators need time to learn, implement new practices, and reflect upon their practice."

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In July 2003, following advice from Mrs. Eileen Weiser and Mr. John Austin, co-chairs of the State Board of Education Task Force on Ensuring Excellent Educators, a foreword was added to strengthen the proposed updates and better reflect the recommendations of that task force report.

If the professional development vision and NSDC Standards of Staff Development are approved, it is proposed that they be disseminated to Michigan educators to guide their choices and shape the design of opportunities for professional learning for all staff to ensure excellent educators that have the knowledge and skills to increase student learning.

It is recommended that the State Board of Education:

1. approve the adoption of the updated vision of professional development with the NSDC Standards of Staff Development (2001); and
2. direct the Superintendent of Public Instruction to disseminate the updated vision and standards of professional development to Michigan schools, professional organizations, and other interested parties as discussed in the Superintendent's revised memorandum of August 25, 2003.

UPDATED VISION AND STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OF MICHIGAN EDUCATORS

Foreword

The State Board of Education recognizes a sense of urgency about the need to provide statewide professional development that will improve student learning in all Michigan schools, with special emphasis on the schools identified as high priority.

The professional development of the last three decades has had very little measured impact on student achievement. It is time to revise professional development in principle and practice, i.e., it must be consistent with the adult learning theory; it must provide opportunities for educators to learn content knowledge and apply new knowledge in their work; and it must encourage educators to use data and to reflect personally and professionally on the results of changes in their practice.

All five of the State Board of Education's Task Force Reports joined the 2001 Elementary and Secondary Education Act in calling for a renewed emphasis on professional development to ensure that all children in Michigan receive education consistent with high standards of instruction. The development of proposed learning communities must result in high levels of learning for each child as called for in each Task Force report.

- Ensuring Excellent Educators
- Elevating Educational Leadership
- Embracing the Information Age
- Ensuring Early Childhood Literacy
- Integrating Communities and Schools

Researchers William Sanders and Katie Haycock of The Education Trust pointed out in a presentation to Michigan's State Board of Education on June 12 and July 19 of 2001 the very high stakes for rigorous learning experiences for teachers, by naming a child's teacher as the single most important controllable variable in a child's achievement, outranking any economic, ethnic or racial barrier. Current expert thinking also holds that the knowledge and skills of educators will more likely be impacted if professional learning experiences are

- content-based;
- practice-based;
- research or evidence-based; and
- grounded in pedagogical content

The State Board of Education supports continuing the requirement that Michigan schools provide 5 days of professional development for their staff and 15 days of professional development for those new to the profession. The State Board of Education recommends and advocates for the resources to support quality professional development, and supports an increase in resources for the induction period of new teachers. The State Board of Education also approves high standards of program preparation for the pre-service professional development for Michigan educators. In approving the National Staff Development Council's Standards and a new vision of professional learning, the State Board of Education raises the bar for post-graduate professional development for Michigan educators. These standards and this vision will be used as the criteria to drive the professional development policies and practices of the Michigan Department of Education and all Michigan schools. These standards and the updated vision serve to point the way for Michigan educators to choose experiences that sustain their learning beyond one-day and short-term conferences and workshops, to enhance the potential for substantive change in knowledge and skill that will benefit all Michigan students.

Professional Development Through Learning Communities: Ensuring Cultures in Michigan Schools in Which All Learners Learn at High Levels

It is the vision of the Michigan Department of Education that quality professional development results in the improvement of student learning. Quality professional development is characterized by meaningful, collegial dialogue that:

- *Explores current content knowledge, inquiry learning processes, and student thinking.*
- *Contributes to a school culture that promotes learning at high levels for both students and educators.*

Introduction

This document expresses a vision of professional development that extends the vision described in the Michigan Curriculum Framework (1996). It also updates the standards to reflect current understanding of human development and adult learning, and the impact of quality teaching and leadership on student learning. The vision, expectations, and National Staff Development Standards together provide guidance to Michigan school districts as they, in turn, provide professional development for their staff.

Acquiring new information is only the beginning of the learning cycle. The process of learning requires exploration of new information through application, reflection, and assessment of impact and its relevance to student learning. Teaching is the process that facilitates students' acquisition and application of new information and skills. Professional development is the parallel process that facilitates educators' acquisition and application of new information and skills. To impact the operation of schools and student achievement, educators must go beyond simply hearing or reading new information to having discourse with professional colleagues about inquiry and application of new ideas and skills. Their discourse must emphasize the assessment of those ideas and skills on student learning.

The goal of professional development is to help educators (defined as all members of the school environment) acquire or enhance the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to create high levels of learning for all students (Guskey & Sparks). This vision of professional development shows the importance of applying new ideas after acquiring them from a variety of experiences, including conferences, workshops, mentoring, mentorships, and study groups. It defines professional development in the context of educators learning from and with one another for the purpose of facilitating student learning.

There are many types of professional development for a variety of specific outcomes related to teaching and learning. There is no single type that answers the needs of all educators. Meaningful professional development requires opportunities for personal reflection and conversation among colleagues within a school environment that is dedicated to learning. A learning community is a school environment where all stakeholders study teaching and learning through analysis of data about student learning and research, engagement in collegial conversation, and application of proven practice.

Expectations of Quality Professional Learning

- **Educators improve their practice throughout their careers.**
- **Educators focus their professional development on issues of improving student learning.**
- **Educators analyze data about teaching practices and student learning in order to make choices about professional development.**
- **Educators analyze student learning data to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development.**
- **Educators learn through study, reflection, and collegial conversation.**
- **Educators benefit from professional development that occurs as a part of the work-day and how it relates to the work they do.**
- **Educators who participate in learning communities study the learning process together - their own and that of their students.**
- **Educators must rethink the ways in which time and resources are used for professional development.**
- **Educators in administrative roles and those new to the profession have unique professional development needs.**
- **Professional development is a balance between the needs of individual educators and the needs of district leadership who hold the vision for the whole school system.**

Executive Summary

Members of the school environment learn from one another about how to effectively facilitate student learning. They learn by acquiring new information and by applying it to their work. They learn from one another by sharing ideas about the work they do and talking about which factors have a positive impact on student learning and which do not. They use current research about teaching and learning to study together through meaningful conversation, application of new ideas and reflection in groups of trusted colleagues. These groups of colleagues are called learning communities. Learning communities are guided by data on student learning, research on improved teaching and leadership practices, and state and national curricula standards that indicate what students know and should be able to do. Educators who learn together in learning communities contribute to a school culture in which all learners learn at high levels.

National Staff Development Council Standards of Staff Development

These standards were revised in 2001 to reflect current understanding of human development and adult learning. They remain in the three categories (context, process and content) in which they were divided in 1996, and are found in the earlier professional development section of the *Michigan Curriculum Framework*.

Context Standards

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.

LEADERSHIP: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful schools and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.

RESOURCES: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

Process Standards

DATA-DRIVEN: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

EVALUATION: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.

RESEARCH-BASED: Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision-making.

DESIGN: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.

LEARNING: Staff development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.

COLLABORATION: Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

Content Standards

EQUITY: Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.

QUALITY TEACHING: Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies (to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards), and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

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